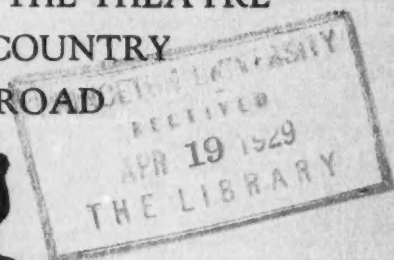


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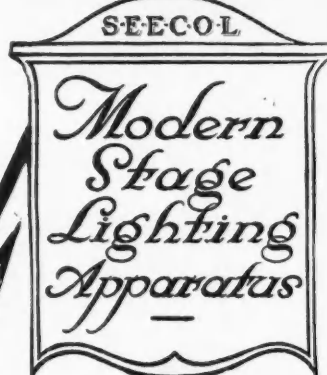
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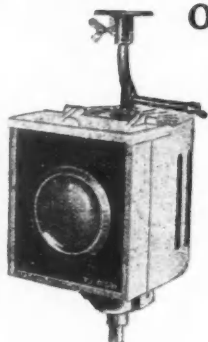
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DRAMA

VOL. VII

APRIL MCMXXIX

NUMBER 7

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By C. B. Purdom

I HAVE recently seen one new play that I care to write about, the rest are revivals. The new play was a failure, lasting no more than six nights. I do not think the public can be blamed for not liking Miss Naomi Royde-Smith's "Mafro, Darling!" The title was enough to put them off, as it (perhaps) put off the critics, who, almost to a man, treated the play as a farce not quite farcical enough to succeed. Miss Royde-Smith, who is a writer of delicate comedy, was not able to manage the first act of her play. She seemed to push her characters on to the stage and leave them to introduce themselves, and when the act was over we had certainly met them all, but why, and what was to happen afterwards, we were not given the ghost of an idea. The second and third acts were excellent, containing, I thought, some of the best comedy the stage has seen for years. Mr. Ernest Milton played with great skill, but the play needed more gaiety than he put into his part.

Mr. C. K. Munro's play "The Rumour," for which Miss Hilda Dallas is responsible at the Court Theatre, should be seen by everyone. When the Stage Society did it seven years ago it took nearly five hours: it has now been arranged to take half that time. It is a political play, and no doubt the author has a purpose; but it is first class dramatic writing, amusing, thrilling and stimulating. It is admirably acted by Mr. Michael

Sherbrook, Mr. Charles Carson, and others. There is a tremendously long cast, and no less than fourteen scenes; but the whole thing is handled with great skill.

"Fashion or Life, in New York," lately done at the Gate Theatre Studio, and now put on at the Kingsway Theatre with entirely new scenery and an almost new cast, makes an entertaining evening. Played unevenly, I thought, and needing more music, it is still a very agreeable and unusual affair.

Miss Sybil Thorndike in "Major Barbara" ought to have a real success. The play is Shaw at his best, and Miss Thorndike likes it. Mr. Baliol Holloway does not look the part as Andrew Undershaft: he appears as though he lived too anxious a life. But he speaks well and missed none of Undershaft's deadly sayings. Mr. Lewis Casson played too much like Professor Gilbert Murray to get all that was possible out of his part. This Professor of Greek was really a mild young man: he must have been, to have liked beating a big drum in the Salvation Army. The first act plays a bit shabbily, due to faulty staging and production. The second act in the Salvation Army Shelter goes as well as ever. The third act, drowned in discussion, is, as it always was, too long, but no one wishes to lose a word. The play hasn't been seen in London (except at the Everyman's Theatre) for twenty-four years, and it is a pleasure to see it again. What

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

Mr. Shaw says about the Salvation Army is as much to the point to-day as ever it was. And what he says in it about life is as searching as anything he ever wrote. There is plenty of laughter in the play; but much else too.

I won't omit mention of Mr. Seymour

Hicks in *Mr. What's His Name*. It is not a play for amateurs, and Mr. Hicks is not an actor to imitate; but if you want to see an actor at work, from whom any amount may be learned, then you can include a visit to the Lyceum Theatre on your programme.

THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL

We are now able to print a complete list of the entries in the National Festival of Community Drama arranged under the six areas in the Festival. The names of the plays which were selected to appear in the Area Finals are printed in italics, and an asterisk after any entry denotes that that play was a new and original one, eligible under Rule 22 of the Festival for the special award for the best play by a new author in the Festival. These plays are being read by Mr. W. A. Darlington and his award will be made public at the National Festival Final on April 8.

The Area Festivals in England were judged by Mr. Joseph Thorp, the Dramatic Critic of "Punch," and the Festival at Glasgow by Mr. W. G. Fay, both acting on behalf of the Council of the British Drama League. The six plays selected for the Final Festival are as follows:—

Birdwell (Barnsley) W.E.A. Players—"Black Dogs," by Machon Ibbotson. St. Luke's Dramatic Society, Wolverhampton—"Joe," by Jane Dransfield. Beethoven Street Old Scholars' Club, London—"The Autocrat of the Coffee Stall," by Harold Chapin. Bristol Drama Club—"Scissors for Luck," by Dorothy Howard Rowlands. Liverpool Playgoers' Club—"The Devil Among the Skins," by Ernest Goodwin. Edinburgh Elocution Club (Group D)—"The Wooing o't," by W. D. Cocker.

The attention of readers is also invited to the notes on the Festival appearing on page 105 in this number of the magazine.

SCOTTISH AREA

The Festival in this Area was organized by the Scottish Community Drama Association. The number of entries has greatly increased in Scotland this year, and after one or two last minute withdrawals, eighty-seven teams appeared in the Preliminary Festivals, made up as follows:—South-East Sub-Area, 29; South-West Sub-Area, 40; Central Sub-Area, 11; Northern Sub-Area, 7. A most promising feature has been the receipt of entries from towns and even districts which have not previously competed. Entries have been received from places as far removed as Inverness and Stranraer, Dumbarton and Kelso. The

Scottish Association has been glad to welcome a substantial number of teams from the Women's Rural Institutes whose interest in drama is increasingly active.

Mr. Tyrone Guthrie was the Adjudicator for the South-East and Northern Sub-Areas and Mr. Cyril Wood adjudicated the South-West and Central Sub-Areas. Owing to a difficulty as to dates, Mr. Guthrie relieved Mr. Wood of six teams appearing in two Festivals at Stranraer in the South-West Sub-Area. The candid but tactful criticisms and constructive advice of both these gentlemen were greatly appreciated by the teams everywhere, and judging by the enthusiasm, not only among those societies

THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL

which entered, but among others which did not enter this year, the Scottish Association has reason to expect a much further increase in the number of entries for next Festival. Owing to the elimination of Sub-Area Final Festivals, every team which entered has had the benefit of adjudication either by Mr. Guthrie or Mr. Wood and this has been a most important factor in the success of the Festival.

Mr. W. G. Fay was the Adjudicator of the Scottish Final Festival at Glasgow.

PLAYS ENTERED IN THE SCOTTISH AREA CENTRAL SUB-AREA

Dundee Dramatic Society, A. "The Shillin'-a-Week Man."
B, "E. and O.E."
C, "Changing Guard."
D, "Fire Triumphant."
Dunfermline Dramatic Society. "The King of Morven."
Dunfermline Dramatic Society. "The £12 Look."
Kirkcaldy Parish Church Literary Society Players "The Woin' O't."
"The Bailie's Nominee."
Perth Y.M.C.A. Players. "The Discovery."
Perth Y.M.C.A. Players. "The Courtin' o' Kitty."

NORTHERN SUB-AREA

The Aberdeen High School F.P. Dramatic Club. "The Adventure of Lady Ursula, Act I."
Aberdeen University Dramatic Society. "Rory Aforesaid."
Belmont Dramatic Society. "Ole George comes to Tea."
Blackburn Amateur Dramatic Society. "Eggs."
Inverness Comedy Players. "Op o' me Thumb."
Northern Theatre Club. "The Locked Chest."
St. Margaret's School Dramatic Society. "The Invisible Duke."

SOUTH-WEST SUB-AREA

Alexander's Neilston Dramatic Society A Team. "The Best Laid Schemes."
B Team. "The Ambition of Annabella Stordie."
The Amateur Players. "Glensheugh."
Ardrossan and Saltcoats Players. "A Well-remembered Voice."
Ayr Amateur Players. "The Price of Coal."
Bigger W.R.I. "I'm Sorry—It's Out."
Canal Street U.F. Dramatic Society. "Stewart of Ardbeg."
Carntyne U.F. Church Dramatic Club. "Waterloo."
The Cardonald Players. "The Poacher."
Catrine Amateur Players. "The Shillin'-a-Week Man."
Clydebank Players A Team. "The Dreamer."
B Team. "The Woman Next Door."
The College Players. "The Poacher."
Crossford W.R.I. "The Price of Coal."
The Dowalton Players. "The Tea Party."

Dumfries Guild of Players A Team. "Cupid and the Kirk."*

B Team. "The Hoose wi' the Golden Windaes."

Dunbritton Amateurs. "Merchant of Venice."

Erskine Players. "The Laird's Lucky Number."

The Girvan A.D.S. A Team. "The Loud Speaker."

B Team. "The Best Laid Schemes."

Inverkip Dramatic Club. "Black 'Ell."

Kelvinside Academical D. Club. "More Things."**
"Free Speech."

The Kirkintilloch Players. "The New Provost."**

Lanarkshire W.R.I. "Grannies Juliet."

Laurel Bank (1928) Club. "The Cradle Song."

The Locksmiths. "The Door of Destiny."

"The Shadow of Fear."

The Mull of Galloway Players. "Riders to the Sea."

Newark Amateur Players (Greenock). "The Nightingale."

The New Trows Players. "The Poacher."

Port Logan Players. "Scene from 'Cranford'."

The Rhine Amateurs. "Quality Street." (Act I).

St. George Co-op. Dramatic Society. "A Woin' o' 't."

"A Valuable Rival."

St. Medan. "The Land of Heart's Desire."

The Singer Players. "The Whippet."

Stewartry Federation of W.R.I. "Followers."

T.P. Maley. "No Room at the Inn."

SOUTH-EAST SUB-AREA

Bonnybridge Amateur Dramatic Association. "The Bishop's Candlesticks."

Caridacia Dramatic Society. "The Touch of the Child."

Edinburgh Elocution Club A Team. "The Crystal Set."

B Team. "C'est la Guerre."

C Team. "In the Darkness."

D Team. "The Woin' o' 't."

The Edinburgh Jewish D.S. "E. and O.E."

Edinburgh Philosophical Institution D.S. A Team. "The Clan of Lochlann."

B Team. "The Wonderful Son."

Falkirk High School Club Dramatic Circle. "The Change House."

The Falkirk Iron Co. Welfare Club, Dramatic Section. "The Price of Coal."

Falkirk Larbert Club.

Grangemouth High School F.P. Club. "Quality Street" (Act III).

The Heriot Watt Drama Study Club. "An Ideal Husband" (Act III).

Kelso Dramatic and Art Society A Team. "The Old Bull."

B Team. "Trifles."

The M.M. Players. "Chatelard."

Morebattle Mutual Improvement Society. "Cock o' the North."

Newbattle Burns Club D.S. "Hunky Dory" (Act I).

Parkside Dramatic Society. "The Pie in the Oven."

The Renertory Players A Team. "The Twelve Pound Look."

B Team. "A Maitter o' Money."

THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL

St. John's Episcopal Church D.S. A Team. "Master of the House."
B Team. "The Marrying of William."
St. Mark's Drama Study Circle. "The Twelve Pound Look."
The Selkirk Players. "The Woonin' o' 't."
Slamannan Dramatic Association. "Stewart of Ardbeg."
The Studio Theatre. "The House with the Twisty Windows."
The Thespians. "The Flat Hunters."

NORTH-EASTERN AREA

Chairman: James R. Gregson. Vice-Chairman: G. F. Hellewell. Secretary: Miss A. M. Marsland. Treasurer: Arthur E. Payne and a Committee consisting of a representative from each Society entered.

This year 21 Societies entered the Festival presenting in the aggregate 29 plays. The entries this season which have been more truly representative of the North-Eastern Area include Societies from Sheffield to Newcastle and from Settle to Scarborough.

The Local Judge was Mr. J. W. Bolton (Peter Quince of the "Yorkshire Evening Post") who visited the whole of the plays presented.

The Sheffield section of six Societies presented nine plays. These were arranged as a Local Dramatic Festival of three successive nights, during which the whole of the plays were given, thus saving the judge several visits to Sheffield.

The Area Final took place at Leeds on Saturday, February 16. The winner of the Festival was announced by Mr. Joseph Thorp as York Settlement Community Players.

This judgment has since been reversed owing to the fact that the play exceeded the time limit prescribed in the National Rules, and Birdwell W. E. A. Players were therefore placed first.

The Local Judge in his report suggests, that if the number of entries should continue to increase, it may be necessary that plays offered for performance, should be submitted before the entry is accepted to a Committee or some suitable person, who should have the power to say whether the play reached the standard expected in the Contest.

PLAYS ENTERED IN THE NORTH-EASTERN AREA

Birdwell W.E.A. Players. "Black Dogs," by Machon Ibbotson.
Corbridge Valley Players. "Dark Lady of the Sonnets," by G. B. Shaw.
"The Crowd," by Helen Gordon.
Denaby Church Players. "A Little Fowl Play," by Owen.
Harrogate Girls' Club. "Tyranny and Teacakes," by O. M. Popplewell.*
"The Crowd," by Helen Gordon.
Hull Playgoers' Society. "In their Own Image," by E. M. Appleton.*
Leeds Civic Playhouse. Act II "The Play's the Thing," by Wodehouse.
Leeds Montague Burton's D.S. "Morocco Call," by James R. Gregson.
St. James and Cloughton Players. "The Man Who Sang at Home," by R. A. H. Goodyear.
"Old Adam's Way," by R. A. H. Goodyear.
Scarborough Players. "A Car Given Away," by R. A. H. Goodyear.
Settle Drama Club. "Campbell of Kilmohr," by J. A. Ferguson.
Sheffield Caledonian Players. "The Pie in the Oven," by J. J. Bell.
Sheffield Everyman Players. "Liddy," by James R. Gregson.
Sheffield Lillias Howson Players. "Between the Soup and the Savoury," by Gertrude Jennings.
"The Last Man In," by W. B. Maxwell.
Sheffield Playgoers' Society. "The First and the Last," by John Galsworthy.
"The Grand Cham's Diamond," by A. M. Monkhouse.
"The Master Wayfarer," by Harold Terry.
Sheffield Thespians. "The Drums of Oude," by Austin Strong.
Sheffield Y.M.C.A. Dramatic Society. "The Dumb and the Blind," by Harold Chapin.
Swinton Players. "Crabbed Youth and Age," by Lennox Robinson.
Wombwell Thespians. "Price of Coal," by Harold Brighthouse.
York Settlement Community Players. "King Lear's Wife," by Gordon Bottomley.
York Settlement Community Players. "Possession," by Laurence Housman.
"The Old Bull," by Bernard Gilbert.

NORTH-WESTERN AREA

No less than fourteen newcomers entered for the Festival this season, gratifying evidence of increasing interest. Unfortunately five of these subsequently withdrew owing to illness among the casts or other unforeseen difficulties, and nine of last season's participants decided not to enter this year. In the end, there were only nineteen entries, the same number as previously, and as only three societies entered



THE HARANGUE TO THE STUDENTS. A SCENE FROM MAJOR FRANK VERNON'S RECENT PRODUCTION OF "RED RUST," AT THE LITTLE THEATRE. THE PLAY IS BY THE RUSSIAN DRAMATISTS, KIRCHON AND OUSPENSKY, AND IS THE MOST INTERESTING STAGE EXPRESSION OF BOLSHEVISM THAT HAS SO FAR BEEN SEEN IN THIS COUNTRY.



FROM "ISADORA DUNCAN," A VOLUME
OF TWENTY-FOUR CAMERA STUDIES
BY ARNOLD GENTHE, WITH A FORE-
WORD BY MAX EASTMAN, REPRO-
DUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF
THE PUBLISHER, MR. MITCHELL
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more than one play, the total of plays fell from 32 to 24.

Liverpool continues to be the centre of interest, Merseyside contributing twelve of the nineteen societies, and securing two of the four places in the Area Final. Twelve of the plays were performed at the David Lewis Theatre, where the Final takes place on March 9. South Derbyshire, North East Lancashire, Westmoreland and Cumberland are still entirely unrepresented.

Artistically, the Festival maintains the high standard of its predecessors. The selection of plays shows a pleasing variety, and it is gratifying that only one of the four successful societies has previously reached the Area Final, two being newcomers to the Festival. The performances were judged by Mr. James R. Gregson, whose active participation in the North Eastern Area Festivals gives him unique qualifications for the task.

PLAYS ENTERED IN THE NORTH-WESTERN AREA

- The Auton A.D.S. "The Wedding Morning," by Schnitzler-Barker.
 The Beechcroft Players at The Settlement, Whetstone Lane. "King Lear's Wife," by Gordon Bottomley.
 Belvedere Old Girls' D.S. "Let It Go at That," by Essex Dane.
 Bromley A.D.S. "Afternoon," by Philip Johnson.
 Buxton Branch of the B.D.L., at The Hydro. "The Drums of Oude," by Austin Strong.
 Centenary Players. "The Twelve Pound Look," by J. M. Barrie.
 Holiday Fellowship Players. "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets," by G. B. Shaw.
 Jewish Amateur Players. "Champagne." Translated by Ella Bloch from the Yiddish of Isaac Leon Perutz.
 Jewish Amateur Players. "Prophecy" (Episode V of Exodus), by H. F. Rubinstein and Halcott Glover.
 Lancaster Footlights Club. "A Family Matter," by Maud Cassidy. "Barbara's Wedding," by J. M. Barrie. "The Crier by Night," by Gordon Bottomley.
 Liverpool and District Teachers' D.S. "The Lovely Miracle," by Philip Johnson.
 Liverpool Playgoers' Club. "Judge of all the Earth," by Stephen Schofield. "The Devil Among the Skins," by Ernest Goodwin. "The First and the Last," by John Galsworthy.
 Liverpool University D.S. "The Murder of Clarence" (Richard III), by W. Shakespeare.
 Manchester University Settlement Players. "The Trial Scene, St. Joan," by G. B. Shaw.
 "From Morn to Midnight" (Scene VII), by George Kaiser.

Players D.S. "Trifles," by Susan Glaspell.
 Revillo Comedy Company. "Memoirs," by Philip Johnson.

St. Augustine Players. "Hereditament," by Mary Dyson.*

W.E.A., Liverpool. "Simoon," by Strindberg.

W.E.A., Manchester and Salford. "The Cage," by Philip Johnson.

MIDLAND AREA

Once more the Birmingham Amateur Dramatic Federation has undertaken the organization of the Midland Area Festival, the actual administration being delegated to the following Committee:—

Chairman: Mr. L. B. Chatwin (Hon. Sec. B.A.D.F.); Mr. M. F. K. Fraser, Mr. W. H. Hayward (Birmingham and district); Mrs. Poole, (Wolverhampton); Mr. N. Truman (Nottingham); Mr. C. Davies, W. L. Barber, D. Davidson, E. Hemming (South Wales). Hon. Sec., Dr. E. Voce (Birmingham.)

Twenty societies actually took part in the Area Festival, presenting thirty-two teams between them. The greatest support was naturally found in the large industrial centres, notably Birmingham and Wolverhampton. Each of these cities provided its own group of teams and organized its own Group Festival. The remaining entries were classed together in a third or "Headquarters Group" administered by the Central Committee.

The Area was fortunate in securing Mr. M. F. K. Fraser, dramatic critic of the Birmingham Weekly Post, to adjudicate the whole. Mr. Fraser's enthusiasm for the cause of the Amateur Stage never tires, and his instructive criticism of each competitor's work has been appreciated to the full by all concerned. He reports a marked improvement in every direction this year, so much so that he experienced great difficulty in selecting the four teams for participation in the Midland Area Final at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham, on the evening of Saturday, March 2, 1929.

This Report cannot be closed without a word of praise for the virility of the Wolverhampton Group, under the able administration of Mrs. Poole and Miss Killin. True to the Community spirit all Societies in the Group combined to take over the principal theatre in the City for a full week.

THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL

PLAYS ENTERED IN MIDLAND AREA

BIRMINGHAM GROUP—
 The Apollo Players. "Everybody's Husband."
 The Central Secondary School D.S. "X = O."
 The Community Players. "A Privy Council."
 "Between the Soup and the Savoury."
THE EDGBASTON DRAMATIC CIRCLE. "Borgia."
 The Northfield Community Players. "The Wooing of Maggie."*
 The Heathfield Dramatic Society. "Escape?"
 The Settlement Dramatic Society. "Feed the Brute."
 The Spio Hill Players. "The Man and the Moon." "The Marrying of William." "Oak Chests." "A Domestic Problem."
WOLVERHAMPTON GROUP—
 The Aquarian Players. "Campbell of Kilnhor." "The Man with the Bowler Hat."
 The Grammar School Staff D.S. "Master Wayfarer."
 Mander Bros. Welfare Club D.S. "The Betrayal." "A Simple Sketch."
 The Midland School of Music D.S. "The Old Bull."
 St. Luke's Dramatic Society. "Joe."
 "The Dear Departed."
 The Wolverhampton Student Players. "Will o' the Wisp."
 The (Dickensian) Tabard Players. "Forty Minutes"; "Casualties."
HEADQUARTERS GROUP—
 The Amateur Players, Nottingham. "The Sisters' Tragedy." "Playgoers."
 Coventry Technical School Elocution Class. "The Cradle Song" (Act. I).
 The Dudley Players. "Escape?" "The World Beyond." "When the Wheels Run Down."
 Leamington and Warwick Dramatic Study Club. "The Little Stone House."
 The Robin Hood Players, Mansfield. "The Cobbler's Shop." "The Old Bull."

SOUTHERN AREA

The Southern Area Festival was organized by a Committee consisting of:—

Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth (Chairman); Mr. C. B. Purdom (Hon. Treasurer); Mr. Cyril Wood (Hon. Secretary); Mr. G. W. Bishop; Miss Pickersgill; Mr. Harold Ridge; Mr. Weston Wells; Mrs. Gordon Whitmore; Miss Jessie Ritblat, (Hon. Asst. Secretary).

There was a slight falling off of entries compared with last year—25 Societies taking part. This may have resulted from the raising of the entrance fee from 10s. 6d. to £1.1.0, but this change was deemed to be inevitable owing to the unsatisfactory method of judging in last year's Festival. On that occasion ten voluntary judges had

viewed the various local festivals in pairs, but it was obviously difficult for the same standard to be maintained in every case. This year, therefore, two judges—Mr. C. B. Purdom and Mr. H. F. Rubinstein—were appointed, who undertook to view all the performances.

The Final Festival took place on March 7 at the Theatre of the Royal College of Music, South Kensington, by kind permission of the Council.

PLAYS ENTERED IN THE SOUTHERN AREA

Beckenham Shakespearean Society. "Gifts," by Lal Norris.*
Beethoven Street Old Scholars. (A) "Winter's Tale," Acts II and III.
 (B) "The Autocrat of the Coffee Stall," by Harold Chapin.
 Fellowship Players, Worthing. "The Cradle Song," Act I, by Sierra.
 Friday Players City Lit. Inst. "The Constant Nymph," Act I, Scene 2, by Margaret Kennedy.
 Guildhouse Players. "The Cradle Song," Act I, by Sierra.
 Harpenden Group. "Fancy Free," by Stanley Houghton.
 Harrow County School Old Girls' D.S. "The House Fairy," by Laurence Housman.
 Holy Trinity D.C. "The Lost Silk Hat," by Lord Dunsany.
 Kew A.D.S. "The Storm," by Drinkwater.
Mansfield House Players. "The Locked Chest," by John Masefield.
 Moralin Players. "The Gaol Gate," by Lady Gregory.
 The Orange Pips. "Money Makes a Difference," by F. Morton Howard.
 Prince's Street, Norwich A.D.S. "The Nativity," from the Plays of the Chester Cycle.
 Raynham D.S., Enfield. "The Bishop's Candlesticks," by Norman McKinnel.
 St. John's D.S., Waterloo Road. "Emily's Excuse," by A. J. Talbot.
 "The Tyrant," by Kathleen Robinson.*
 St. Margaret's Fellowship Players. "The Traveler Returns," by Clemence Dane.
 St. Martin's Dramatic Club. "That Brute Simmons."
 Shoreditch Dramatic Society. "Waterloo," by Conan Doyle.
 Shornells Dramatic Society, Plumstead. "Tilly of Bloomsbury," Act III.
 South London Catholic Players. "The Streatham Amateurs Present."
Watford School of Music Dramatic Society. "Trifles," by Susan Glaspell.
 W.E.A., Ealing. "The Boy Comes Home," by A. A. Milne.
 W.E.A., Horsham. "The Storm," by Drinkwater.
 Working Men's College. "Rococo," by H. Granville-Barker.
 Worthing Players. "The Two Gentlemen of Soho," by A. P. Herbert.

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SOUTH-WESTERN AREA

Very gratifying results have attended this year's work in the South-Western Area. By the inclusion of South Wales, the Area consisted of four instead of three Divisions, the other three being, as before, those of Bristol, Bournemouth and Exeter. One team was chosen in each Division to appear in the Area Festival at Bristol on March 8. The number of entries rose from 21 to 37, and of these 33 actually took part, four being withdrawn through illness or other causes.

Owing to the retirement of Mr. Baldwin there was no permanent Chairman of the Area, but this office was filled as occasion arose by Mrs. F. W. Rogers (Hon. Sec. B.D.L., for Bristol and Somerset). Mr. C. M. Haines again acted as Area Secretary and as Secretary to the Bristol Division. At Bournemouth (where the entries are more than double last year's) Mrs. E. A. Heasman retained the position of divisional secretary. At the Exeter Division Prof. Eric Patterson was unfortunately unable to take control, and the post of divisional secretary was kindly undertaken at very short notice by Mr. R. Glave Saunders. Mr. Conrad Davis gave valuable help in setting up the organization in South Wales, and Mr. Ronald Evans acted as secretary of the new division.

To meet the difficulties of calling a meeting of the full Area Committee, a local Sub-Committee was set up in Bristol for dealing with urgent and executive questions. This Committee consisted of Mrs. F. W. Rogers, Chairman, Mrs. Nora Roberts, Mr. H. F. Harvey and the Secretary: and by meeting frequently was able to exercise a more satisfactory control than existed last year over the organization of the Area.

The large increase of entries, together with the decided financial success of the Area Festival, has at last enabled the Committee to place the Area on a sound financial basis. This result has been made possible by the whole-hearted co-operation of Mr. Lewis, manager of the Little Theatre and his staff. The Committee has expressed and desires to put on record its hearty thanks to these and to many other people who so generously gave their services. In view

of this year's difficulties they confidently hope for an even more successful outcome to the next Festival.

PLAYS ENTERED IN SOUTH-WESTERN AREA

BRISTOL DIVISION

- The Bristol Drama Club.* "Scissors for Luck," by Dorothy Howard Rowlands. "Eleven-Thirty," by R. J. McGregor.
The Clifton Arts Club. "Young Love," by Cyril Roberts. "Quickly Does It," by Stephen Barnett.* "So Good," by Cyril Roberts (the winning play of the Club's Dramatic Contest).
The Freshford Players. "The Bishop's Candlesticks," by Norman McKinnel. "Evening Dress Indispensable," by Roland Pertwee.
The Folk House Players. "The Lady from the Sea," Act II, by Henrik Ibsen.

EXETER DIVISION

- The Exeter Drama League.* "Crabbed Youth and Age," by Lennox Robinson. "The Saint's Comedy," by F. Sladen-Smith.
The Falmouth Little Theatre Players. "The Cromlech," by W. Vaughan-Jones.* "The Knife of Sacrifice," by W. Vaughan-Jones.*
The Teignmouth Literary Society. "Oleg the Fool," by J. H. W. Trumper.*
The St. Ives Dramatic Society. "Overtones," by Alice Gerstenberg.

BOURNEMOUTH DIVISION

- The Bournemouth Dramatic and Orchestral Club.* "The Call," by Cecile Boxer. "The Ship," by Ianthe Jerrold.
The Boscombe Players. "Mother of Pearl," by Gertrude Jennings.
The Boscombe Players. "Michael," by Miles Malleson.
The Highcliffe Dramatic and Debating Society. "In the Zone," by Eugene O'Neill. "Coincidence," by A. G. W. Lawrie.*
The Weymouth and District Amateur Dramatic Society. "Master Wayfarer," by J. E. Harold Terry.
The Fernhill Manor Dramatic Society. "My Lady's Shoe," by Rachel Swete Macnamara.*

SOUTH WALES DIVISION

- The Garth Players.* "The Little Stone House," by George Calderon.
The Blaengarw Amateur Dramatic Society. "John Ferguson," Act I, by St. John Ervine. "The Sister's Tragedy," by Richard Hughes.
The Garrick Amateur Dramatic Society, Mid-Rhondda. "Man and Superman," Act I, by Bernard Shaw.
The Cardiff Repertory Players. "The Eve of St. John," by J. Saunders Lewis.
The Trecynon Amateur Dramatic Society. "Cloudbreak," by A. O. Roberts. "The Sister's Tragedy," by Richard Hughes. "The Man Nobody Believes," by C. W. Miles.*
The Mardy Dramatic Party. "Cloudbreak," by A. O. Roberts. "The Stranger," by D. I. Davies. "Homing," by Conrad Davis.*

DEBATE ON THE CENSORSHIP

The members of the Drama League Club Room held their first debate on Tuesday, February 19, when the following resolution was put to the meeting: "That the Censor of Plays is a Public Benefactor." Mr. Clifford Bax occupied the chair, and said that his contribution to the evening's light entertainment was an easy one. The speakers needed no introduction—they were both well known. The discussion had no intimate relation to the British Drama League. Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth was speaking for himself, and not as a responsible official of the League. With regard to Mr. John van Druten, he thought his personal indebtedness to the Censor was a considerable one.

Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, in moving the resolution, said that the question of censorship had declined in public interest because it was realised that the present Censor was really an admirable person. Whatever dissatisfaction there was, it was not so much with our Censor as with the whole idea of Censorship, and the discussion must be, not whether the present Censor was a good one, but whether we wanted Censorship at all. Most civilized countries had a censorship, and if not, they called in the police or magistrates. For the reason for censorship they had to go a long way back. Physical life needed censorship. Into various forms it evolved by reason of the clash of what seemed to be a blind impulse with various restraining forces. In the moral sphere the same principle was at work. It was, therefore, within the right of every society to decide what form its moral life should take. Here the influence of the theatre was most important. Yet the artist claimed to be exempt from censorship. But society could not afford to tolerate that exemption entirely. Even patriotism had to be censored by the League of Nations. The Divine Right of Kings had had to be censored, so were artists the only people to claim a divine right above the law? The functions of a censor were to stand for that mental equilibrium necessary for any healthy society. The real difficulty was to discover a means whereby one person could fix a standard for the whole community. Without a censor, one did not know what might happen. People were ready to prostitute the art of the theatre to a very base purpose.

The alternative to censorship was to enforce the common law of the land, which would come down on any flagrant misrepresentation. On the artistic side, managers then might be afraid to put on plays, as they might not pass the police court censors, whereas to-day they have that assurance beforehand. Without a censor, artistic freedom would not be greater, but it could quite conceivably be less than to-day. If they had complete license, they would very soon have reaction, and the artist would be in a less free position than before. The Victorian era, when moral censorship was at its height, did not show less artistic creativeness than the eighteenth century. The existence of the censorship was a powerful asset and a direct stimulant to the dramatist. Shakespeare was certainly confronted by a much higher moral standard than we had now, for he was influenced by that very great Catholic morality, which had an enormous effect on his mind. Yet, in the plays of Shakespeare

we were conscious of an extraordinary freedom of expression.

Mr. John van Druten opposed the resolution, and he made it quite clear at the start that he was opposing on the ground that the Censor of Plays is not a Public Benefactor, however much a Private Benefactor he might be to anyone like himself. The censorship of plays was, he thought, excellent for managers, as they knew their theatre would not be shut down on the grounds of immodesty, indecency, or on any grounds on which the Censor acted. All legislation was an infringement on our personal liberty. That was the ordinary common law of the land, but those infringements of our liberties had been chosen for us by ourselves. The censorship of plays we had not chosen for ourselves. He compared the freedom spoken of under the present system with the police censorship in America, and said the New York Police Censorship worked in a peculiar way because it was corrupt. On the whole, the plays closed down in New York had been very few.

"Was the Censor to judge the susceptibilities of the whole audience?" he asked. "Young Woodley" was banned because of the susceptibilities of parents. "What about me?" said Mr. van Druten, "I have had to sit and listen to sentimental plays being applauded that deeply offended my susceptibilities." On whose susceptibilities then was it to be decided? Was it not rather a question of the artistic consciousness of the nation? Through the Censorship, the theatre had to falsify, and falsify, and it was not the mirror of life at all.

What was the object of the theatre? If it were merely entertainment, then have your Censor, but your sincere artist wanted it to be something more than that, and the public would be benefited by the artist being set free to express himself. The artist must not falsify life. The theatre was the only form of art that was subject to this peculiar form of censorship. Although the Censor had been a very great private benefactor to him, from the public point of view, he laid it down that the artist must be free, subjected only to the ordinary State laws.

In the ensuing discussion, the Chairman said that it seemed obvious some form of control was desirable. What form should that take? Plays ought to be controlled within reason, and he personally thought one public man was better than waves of public opinion.

Replying, Mr. van Druten stressed the points as to why the Censor considered one set of susceptibilities and not another. The theatre was the only art subject to this special censorship. The novel was not. How often was that banned? He believed very few plays in the theatre would have to be stopped. The Sunday Play Societies were obviously based on the desire of a limited number of intelligences to evade the censorship. Of course, the police had a certain control over them. "Why not divide the theatre into two parts?" he said, in closing, "(a) amusements for the general public, subject to censorship, (b) the intellectual theatre which the public knows it takes a risk in going to."

A vote of hands showed an equal number for and against the resolution. Mr. Clifford Bax, as Chairman, gave his casting vote in its favour.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

President:

LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN.

Chairman of the Council:

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Telephone: GERRARD 8011

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

THIS number of DRAMA is rightly devoted very largely to a report of the entries in the National Festival of Community Drama, the final of which will take place at a matinée at Wyndham's Theatre on Monday, April 8, at 1.30. The judges will be Miss Sybil Thorndike, Sir Barry Jackson and Mr. Joseph Thorp, the dramatic critic of *Punch*, and we hope that all members of the Drama League who possibly can will be present at the matinée or will make it known to their friends. Those who trouble to compare the list with last year's will find that the total of entries has increased by fifty. All the areas show a greater number of entries with the exception of the Southern Area, and the increase is especially marked in Scotland which this year provides no less than eighty-eight competitors. The South-Western Area shares with Scotland

the honour of the greatest increase. We had feared that the many difficulties which have been experienced in that area might have proved insurmountable but, thanks to the efforts of Mr. C. M. Haines and his committee, what appeared to be a condition of some danger has been turned into one of positive prosperity. The Welsh entry in the South Western Area is encouraging: ten competitors against one last year. We hope that this means that before long Wales will find itself eligible for area representation. Numbers, however, are not the only criterion by which the success of the Festival is to be judged, and the Central Committee, which meets early in April, will have its work cut out to deal with several proposals by which it is hoped to raise the standard and the tone of the whole Festival.

The Drama League Clubroom is proving a success. Its members already number over 230 and the first Clubroom debate on the Censorship which is reported on a another page was well attended. The next debate will be held on Friday evening, April 19, at 8 o'clock, when Miss Naomi Royde-Smith will propose "that the Broadcast Play is not a satisfactory form of Art." Mr. Compton Mackenzie, who was recently responsible for a most elaborate and exciting broadcast version of his novel "Carnival," will oppose the resolution, and Major Frank Vernon will preside. In order that members of the League generally may have the benefit of sharing in this interesting event we have made special arrangements with the B.B.C. to broadcast the opening speeches.

Next month we shall publish a report of the competition between junior clubs in London organized by the Junior Drama Committee. There have been 37 entries, and the final will take place at the St. Pancras People's Theatre (kindly lent for the occasion) on Saturday, April 6, at 7.30 o'clock. Eight plays will then be offered to the adjudication of Miss Maude Scott.

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

- "Plays." By August Strindberg. (Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation Publications.) Cape. 7s. 6d.
- "Bonaparte." By Fritz Von Unruh. Translated by Edwin Bjorkman. Knopf. 7s.
- "Adam the Creator." By Karel and Josef Capek. Translated by Dora Round. Allen and Unwin. 3s. 6d.
- "Our Bessie." By R. A. H. Goodyear. Blackwell. 3s. 6d.
- "At the Menin Gate." By S. N. Sedgwick. Sheldon Press. 6d.
- "The Little Old Woman." By Ernest Arthur Jelf. Heffer. 2s.

FAR and away the most important play in this month's list is the version of Strindberg's "The Ghost Sonata" done by Mr. James Bernard Fagan and Baron Palmstierna. I do not know the extent of Mr. Fagan's knowledge of Swedish, but I rather hope that it is extremely small: then perhaps this translation will set up a precedent for scholars well qualified to do a literary translation collaborating with men of the theatre who need not necessarily be able to translate a single word of the play's original language. Obviously the translation of a play has to be handled altogether differently from the translation of, say, a novel. Yet, judging from many of the translations which appear, this obvious fact is one that is by no means fully realised. An intimate knowledge of the two languages and complete sympathy with the author are not sufficient to the play translator. The more conscientiously he attempts to reproduce the style of the original the less likely he is to succeed. For instance, if I complain of the excessively jerky dialogue in the translation of "Bonaparte" it is quite possible that the translator will reply that he has merely reproduced a characteristic of the original. But this does not exonerate him from blame. A trick of style which is very effective in one language is often intolerable when transferred to another language and the words spoken on the stage. No actor can bring a character to life if he has to speak a language which to the audience seems stiff and affected. The language may represent an extremely conscientious and sympathetic rendering of the original but that is no concern of the audience. Translations are for people who do not know the original, and the first duty of a play translator is to give the actor dialogue which he can speak easily and naturally—dialogue which is essentially honest, everyday English, not a lastard language decked up in outlandish foreign gewgaws inherited from the original.

"Bonaparte," however, is by no means as bad as this. I suspect that it must have been a peculiarly difficult play to translate. Nearly all the characters use the most florid language which at the slightest provocation becomes perilously near bombast and rant. The English language is apt to be coldly unsympathetic to this kind of speech, so I am ready to believe that in the original the lines sound less hollow and pretentious. On the whole the play is very much more satisfactory regarded merely as a collection of character studies than as

material for the theatre. It has its dramatic moments, but they do not grow naturally out of the play and seem forced—as if the author, primarily interested in history and psychology, had merely thrown them in as a sop to the audience.

To return to the Strindberg volume, besides "The Ghost Sonata" it contains "Easter," "The Dance of Death" and "The Dream Play," together with an excellent but unnecessarily brief introduction by Professor J. G. Robertson. The translations by Mr. E. Classen and Mr. C. D. Locock are vastly superior to any other published versions of the plays, but they seem a trifle formal and academic compared with the vividness and suppleness of the translation of "The Ghost Sonata." It is significant that Mr. Fagan—like Mr. Granville-Barker, whose translations are the most perfect which have ever been given to the English theatre—is both producer and playwright, while practically all the other really satisfying translations are the work of writers such as Mr. Ashley Dukes and Mr. Herman Ould, who have a thorough practical knowledge of the theatre.

The translation of "Adam the Creator" is a sound if uninspired piece of work, always racy and easy to speak, except in the moments when the play for no very obvious reason suddenly takes to blank verse of a sort. On these occasions, the translation is apt to limp along rather laboriously. The idea of the play, like most of the ideas which the Capek brothers hit upon, is on a magnificently audacious scale. Adam (a very modern Adam, by the way) disapproving strongly of the way the world was made, destroys it utterly with his Canon of Negation and finds himself alone upon earth. Whereupon the Voice of God bids him create the world anew for himself. So Adam creates the kind of people he thinks he would like to inhabit the earth, and is soon involved in endless difficulties. But just as Adam is at a loss to know what to do with his power of creation, so the Capeks are at a loss to know what to do with this magnificent idea. On the whole they are happiest when they are treating it in a spirit of broad comedy. When they attempt to grapple seriously with the theme the result is usually platitudinous and sentimental. It is an extremely long play which can stand ruthless cutting, so the acting version (which was produced last year at the Cambridge Festival Theatre) makes a play which is essentially good entertainment. At the same time it reads extremely well—and, in spite of all its faults, it is very well worth reading.

As for the other plays on the list, "Our Bessie" is a sound, rather leisurely play written in the dialect of the North Riding of Yorkshire, though it could be very easily translated into other dialects. Village drama societies will probably find it a useful play. "At the Menin Gate" is another play which can be strongly recommended to the village producer. Mr. Jelf's ballet for children is charming and original, as well as being extremely practicable. Anybody who thinks of reading the book ought to be warned that the very stodgy photographs give a poor idea of the real possibilities of the ballet.

THE PLAY IN THE SCHOOL

VI.—VERSE DRAMA

By Marjorie Gullan

MANY of those who are deeply interested to-day in dramatic work in schools feel the necessity for the development of verse as well as prose in this connection.

Shakespeare, of course, always forms a part of the dramatic endeavours of our school children, but I venture to think that the reason why he is so often inadequately spoken is that our pupils have had no previous knowledge of the speaking of verse in drama. To begin with Shakespeare is to begin with some of the most difficult verse, requiring infinite subtleties of expression and patterning, to say nothing of the technique necessary in the way of breathing and voice production.

Where solo and choral verse-speaking is taught as a part of the English lesson these difficulties are somewhat reduced, but until our children have some experience in the various forms of dramatic verse, we cannot feel that they are equipped for the speaking of the great dramatic masterpieces of our language.

The simplest and most useful introduction to Verse Drama is that of Ballad Acting. Here the verse is extremely simple, the incidents highly dramatic, while a further advantage is to be found in the fact that the children only have a few lines each to speak. They are therefore not unduly worried by the labour of memorizing, nor is a heavy call made upon their, as yet, undeveloped technical ability.

When choosing a ballad for such purposes we must bear in mind one or two things. First the ballad must contain plenty of speaking characters. Second, it must be full of lively, varied incidents and dramatic possibilities. Third, it should, if possible, contain narrative passages to be spoken by a chorus. Fourth, it should provide opportunities for walking-on parts or massed grouping.

Such ballads as "The Princess and the Gypsies" by Francis Cornford, (Modern

Poetry, Kings Treasury Series, Dent and Co.), "Robin Hood and Allen-a-Dale." (Oxford Book of Ballads), "Robin Hood and The Poor Knight" (Junior Form Room Plays, Kings Treasury Series) all contain excellent opportunities for the working out of the values I have indicated.

In each there will be found speaking parts of a few lines each for eight or more characters, whilst the rest of the class can be kept busy and interested by taking the parts of the crowd.

It is a short step from such ballad acting to the adaptation for our classes of parts of "Hiawatha" or the whole of the "Pied Piper." Here again the narrative which must link up the character work gives us the chance we desire of interesting the whole of our class, however large, by making it into the Chorus.

The next step is to make a bridge from the simple and external, to the more highly imaginative forms of Verse Drama. Here nothing better can be used than the dramatic version of the "Nut Brown Maid," charmingly written by Lilian Frances Purdon, and published by Burleigh and Sons. It provides parts in addition to the characters contained in the play for may-pole dancers, little children speaking in simple unison, Morris dancers, as well as lords and ladies.

The great point about this play, as about all that I have already mentioned, is that it can be counted amongst the best poetic literature. Teachers are always seeking for such, since they are well aware of the fatal results of giving undistinguished verse to their scholars. No dignity, truth or beauty can be expressed through the medium of poor lines.

Mrs. Purdon has also written other delightful plays, all of which the writer has produced with school children, as well as the "Nut Brown Maid." These plays are:—"Rhodopis, or The Egyptian

VERSE DRAMA IN SCHOOLS

Cinderella," "Psyche" and "Persephone." The "Nut Brown Maid" and "Rhodopis" are, from the priter's point of view, the most successful of the four, because boys and girls find in them a wide interest connected with the periods. The children have to look up their costumes and understand the customs of the time. This means that they are of immense educative value since the children learn some history out of their own delight and absorbing interest in the plays.

When we come to "Psyche" and "Persephone" we have definitely passed over the bridge of which I spoke. These are of a much more mystical and symbolic character, written in very beautiful verse. Of this type also, is the "Masque of the Two Strangers" by Lady Alice Egerton, published, I believe, by Gowans and Gray, with speaking parts for at least a dozen. It is very attractively written and has been done several times to the writer's knowledge by girls' clubs and Y.W.C.A. Institutes in Scotland. I have also done it myself with senior girls.

There is also a charming little nature play by Margaret Cropper, published by Philip Allan and Co., in which a chorus of Sycamores, Damson trees, Mountain Voices and Streams and an Old House, take part.

It is difficult to understand why the lovely literature of our Bible has not been more used as material for verse-drama for our children. The stories of the Old Testament are so thrilling and so beautifully told. Of course a careful selection would have to be made so that the more blood-thirsty incidents did not figure in the scenes, but one cannot imagine anything more moving or more suitable for pageantry linked with the most wonderful words.

I have not treated of the beautiful translations from Euripides by Professor Gilbert Murray, or the moving poetic dramas of Mr. Gordon Bottomley, such as "Gruach" and the "Riding to Lithend," nor such stirring plays as Mr. Masefield's translation of Racine's "Esther." These are obviously for post-school people, and it would take a separate article to deal with them.

THE FUTURE OF THE AMATEUR MOVEMENT

By F. Sladen Smith

FOR years now the movement generally known as the new amateur movement has gone literally from grace to grace, until, from a slight stirring of unwonted amateur activity in isolated spots, it is a national phenomenon of far-reaching and, indeed, incalculable importance. This has been very frequently said, and certainly by this time is well known to all members of the British Drama League, especially as, possibly, the chief work of the Drama League, at present, consists in helping and guiding the innumerable groups and societies who work for the drama with such amazing persistence. The movement shows no sign of abating: the larger clubs add to their laurels yearly, and smaller groups, inspired by their more important brethren spring up like mushrooms in the night, but,

once they have started, are usually destined to a much longer life than is warranted by the mushroom simile. I imagine that the greater number of readers of this paper are more or less connected with amateur groups, and the amount of work in progress everywhere and the development of the movement year by year will be apparent to them: what is not so apparent, however, is the future development of all this astonishing energy.

It is a truism that nothing remains stationary; either you advance or you recede: either the amateur movement is going to develop still more, or it will, sooner or later, begin that journey down hill which leads to eventual extinction. "Perish the thought!" cry all members of advanced groups, and I echo, most



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THE FUTURE OF THE AMATEUR MOVEMENT

heartily, their devout sentiments, but if the down hill journey is to be avoided, if the movement is to develop still further, what ought we to do? It is a nice question. Few connected with the more famous societies can shut their eyes to the fact that far from difficulties decreasing with success, reputation and large membership, they definitely increase; the productions are finer, there are more helpers than in the old pioneer days, the work, in general, is more worth doing; but the spirit of joyful adventure tends to disappear and serious difficulties of administration and organization tend to creep in.

The greatest reason for this is to be found in the fact that almost every famous society owes its origin to some quite small group of people, not infrequently two or three people only—while there are societies which can almost be said to have been created by one person. Now, these people have, for their great ideal of drama, frequently sacrificed more than anyone outside the movement could possibly realize or believe. The founders of some of our best known societies have deliberately risked health, employment, domestic happiness and friends in order to further the work of the group in which they were so passionately interested. This may sound absurd, but most people will know of cases in which it is perfectly true; and many a society has a private record of sacrifice that amounts to positive heroism. The amateur movement has its martyrs no less than any other important movement. Night after night, year after year, devoted people have worked, and still work, with an unselfish zeal that would appear incredible unless one had actually witnessed it. The movement, almost from the first, has been prolific in creating first class whole time jobs without the money to pay for them. This kind of thing can hardly go on for ever, indeed, it is possible that even now it is on the wane. Supplies of devoted workers are more limited than might be supposed, and, once success has crowned their efforts, it is hardly to be wondered that the original pioneers feel disposed to take a well-earned rest, or, more possibly, are forced at last to take a rest or to attend to their other duties. It is no reflection on those left behind to

say that they rarely have the unflagging energy and unselfish spirit of the original members. Once a group is thoroughly successful and established, the work loses somewhat of its intensity, and perhaps hardly seems so worth while. Also, a largely increased membership gives a delightful impression that many hands are going to make light work; a proverb none too true when applied to amateur drama. Meanwhile, the group has to progress or perish, and, far from the actual difficulties being lighter, they are, now a reputation has to be kept up, more complex than in the old days when a hopeless failure was only one more experiment. The movement still remorselessly creates whole time jobs of even greater responsibility, and still fails to obtain the financial backing necessary to make these whole time jobs in any way remunerative.

This fact constitutes, in my opinion, one of the chief difficulties of the future. For several reasons I think we can hardly hope for such an outcrop of violent enthusiasts as we had in the past; the success of the movement is likely to diffuse and dissipate energy rather than conserve it. Nevertheless, societies will endeavour to produce more and more difficult work with the utmost finish and polish as, naturally, they will not wish to lose their reputation. Can they continue to do this on a purely amateur basis? Many will feel that they can; personally, I doubt it. Of course, some of our largest societies have frankly in view an ultimate professionalization, an eventual repertory theatre, following the example of the groups in America which have sometimes developed into fully fledged repertory theatres—in the smaller towns where the professional theatre is non-existent. But our English societies are still very far from this ideal, if it be an ideal, and for most of the problems which beset the amateur group the best solution would seem to be a paid director—as is the custom in almost all American Little Theatres. The unfortunate thing is that so few societies are able to make what these same American Little Theatres love to term "a worth while proposition," although it must be obvious that there are now a good number of people whose services to any society would be

THE FUTURE OF THE AMATEUR MOVEMENT

invaluable. To my mind, unless some modified professionalism of this sort is possible, some of our best groups are likely to suffer serious set-backs—eventually.

It is perfectly true, however, to say that a professional element, even of this kind may take away some of the original spirit which made the movement so powerful a weapon against the shoddy work done outside, out, as I have tried to show, it may be difficult for the movement to continue and to develop without it. Let the general work be as amateur as you please; unpaid work, done for the love of the thing, has immense value, and often a freshness which carries all before it, but the problem of the whole-time job perpetually created by ambitious and enthusiastic groups will have to be solved eventually. Some societies may feel that they do not wish to develop at the price either of great sacrifice or any form of professionalism, they prefer to jog along comfortably as they are; it is difficult not to have sympathy with such a point of view, but it may easily lead to a slow deterioration. One may advance or recede—and the movement is still advancing with such rapid strides that it is impossible not to envisage the future.

Apart from those who wish to remain as they are, there will also be some societies who will feel that a paid director hardly goes far enough; a whole staff of paid officials may be necessary, even if the acting remains mainly in the hands of amateurs. There are places where this experiment is being tried. But it must be obvious that as soon as this state of things arrives, it is no longer the amateur movement as we know it, it is practically a professional theatre, and will speedily become an actual one, and, at once, face to face with problems so different that they can scarcely be considered in any article on the amateur movement. But the group which sprouts from an amateur club into a professional theatre is like to be very rare; meanwhile, the enthusiastic society that wishes to develop without attempting to become a professional theatre would do well to consider the advantage of having a paid director at the head of things. Let the rest of the organization be thoroughly amateur—in many ways it is an advantage if it

remains so—but let the principal job be a paid one. This may seem an impossible ideal, but it is one worth striving for. Failing this, let another race of heroes and martyrs arrive prepared to shoulder burdens which the early pioneers would have considered impossible, so greatly has the movement advanced since their glorious days.

LECTURES AND OTHER EVENTS IN CONNECTION WITH THIRD LONDON EASTER SCHOOL

At King's College, Campden Hill Road, except where otherwise stated. The students will be welcomed to the School on April 3, at 10.30, by Miss Sybil Thorndike. Open to the Public. At 3 p.m., Shakespeare's Clowns and Fools, Illustrated by Example, Mr. Norman Page.

Thursday, April 4, 3 p.m. Elementary Make-up, Mr. Norman Page.

Friday, April 5, 3 p.m. Elementary Lighting, Mr. Harold Ridge.

Saturday, April 6, 11.15 a.m. Stage Design, Mr. Charles Thomas.

Sunday, April 7, 3 p.m. Choir-speaking, Miss Marjorie Gullan and the London Verse-speaking Choir.

Monday, April 8, 11.30 p.m. At the Royal College of Music, Demonstration of Lighting in London's best-equipped Little Theatre, Mr. Harold Ridge.

Tuesday, April 9, 12 noon. Next Morning Criticism of the Final Competition in the National Festival, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth; Discussion. 3 p.m., Lantern Lecture, Costume of Gentle and Simple Folk, from the Earliest Times to Elizabeth, Mr. Herbert Norris.

Wednesday, April 10, 3 p.m. Advanced Make-up, Mr. Norman Page.

Friday, April 12, 12 noon. The Case Against Shakespeare, and the Answer, F. S. Boas, D.Litt. 3 p.m., At the Victoria and Albert Museum, Free Lantern Lecture, Theatre Costume from Inigo Jones to the Designers of To-day, Mr. James Laver.

Saturday, April 13, 10 a.m. Recent Developments in the Theatre. Mr. Norman Marshall. 11 a.m., Criticism of Students' Exhibits, Mr. Charles Thomas.

Tickets, at the door only, 1s. 6d. All seats unreserved. Each lecture, with questions, will last a little over an hour.

On Friday, April 12, at 7.30, there will be a "Mummers' Party," with competitions in mime, costume, etc., open to students only. Onlookers' tickets, available for members of the League and of Affiliated Societies, 3s. 6d., including refreshments, purchasable in advance only, from the British Drama League.

On Monday, April 8, at 6.30, there will be a Dinner to meet the competitors in the National Festival Final Competition. Tickets, available for students only, 5s. each.

Full course ticket, 30s.; One day (two sessions), 5s. Prospectus on application to the League.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THEATRICAL NOVELTIES IN STOCKHOLM

The theatrical season in Stockholm has this year been characterized by a number of interesting novelties. "Agamemnon," the great tragedy of Aeschylus; "The Birds," the witty diatribe on Athens in 414 B.C. by Aristophanes; "Volpone," the gorgeous Renaissance play by Ben Jonson, and "Strange Interlude," the interesting stage experiment by Eugene O'Neill, are the most outstanding successes of the Stockholm season.

"Volpone" is at present playing at the Oscar Theatre, Stockholm, an enterprise which is conducted by the well-known actor, J. W. Brunius. Its success is partly also due to the striking stage decorations by the well-known artist, Isaac Grunewald, who now and then devotes his leisure hours to stage decorating and in this case gives proof of his brilliant gifts for colour effects.

Of Stockholm's thirteen theatres, the leading three, the Royal Opera, the Royal Dramatic Theatre, both of which are subsidised by the State, and the Oscar Theatre, have combined their efforts to educate public taste by offering the playgoers first-class operas and plays by modern and classical authors of international renown and in their productions have striven to retain the original settings and local colour by elaborate and well-balanced stage decorations and costumes designed by prominent artists, such as Grunewald, Jon-And and Malmquist.

This new tendency in theatrical art has been combined with efforts to popularize good plays and operas amongst the general public through specially arranged low-price matinées and evening performances for children, workmen and schools. These theatres are, therefore, considered to play an important part as educational factors and especially as fostering love for real stage art.

ZODIAC DRAMATIC CLUB.

This society gave three performances of "Secrets" a three-act play with prologue and epilogue by Rudolf Besier and May Edginton at Streatham, in November last. This play, though still unprinted, was not long ago a West End success, with Fay Compton as "lead," and deals with four incidents, or secrets, in the lives of a successful man and his wife between 1867 and 1922. There is a large cast, many of the players appearing at different ages, and consequently the high general level which was reached by all was a great achievement.

Considering how difficult it is for one player to be convincing at four different ages—20, 23, 41 and 75 years—Miss Audrey English sustained the character of the heroine extremely well; her old age was the least good, her middle-age was best.

The dresses were well chosen and the audience much enjoyed the examples of the curious fashions of the second half of the nineteenth century.

L. T.

THE VALLEY PLAYERS.

During the past year the Valley Players have considerably extended the area of their activities. Plays have been given regularly in Newcastle, Corbridge and Hexham, and also in Bensham, Gateshead, Stockfield and Sedgfield.

In December, 1927, they attempted an experiment in a revival of Thomas Randolph's "Amyntas," a charming but little known pastoral play. The play was cut and adapted to the needs of the modern stage, and was dressed and produced in the manner of its period, 1630. Original and effective costumes and scenery were designed for this production by Miss Ursula Ware. The play, however, was not popular with most of the local audiences, who, as a whole, are not interested in experimental drama.

In March, the players produced St. John Ervine's comedy, "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary," which was extremely well received. Miss Audrey Sykes and Mr. Colin Richardson gave outstandingly good performances as "Mary Westlake" and "Sir Henry Considine" respectively. The play was taken on a short tour in October, and met everywhere with approbation.

The most recent production of the Valley Players was a programme of four one-act plays, given in December last. The plays were very varied in type: Susan Glaspell's "Trifles," Shaw's "Dark Lady of the Sonnets," four scenes from "Hamlet," and A. A. Milne's absurdity, "The Princess and the Woodcutter."

This experiment was a very successful one. Wherever it was given the audiences seemed to enjoy the variety of the programme, and to appreciate the versatility of the company.

THE OLD DRURY PLAYERS

When will amateur companies realize that to embark on so popular and outstanding a success as this play, is indeed a most perilous adventure? But the Old Drury Players put up, generally speaking, a quite tolerable performance, and, in particular, the thing was well worth doing because of Miss Bobbie Peacock's Tessa. We will go one further and say with truth that without her adventure might have ended in catastrophe . . .

In judging unprofessional acting one must necessarily adjust the scale of values, but here was a Tessa so true in every detail of that tender, pathetic and completely adorable little character that we were enthralled. This criticism is perhaps of a little more value as it is made after having already seen three professional productions of the play.

The rest of the company were unequal and decidedly weaker on the male side. The poignant scene between Florence (Miss Mary Lyne) and Tessa was well done, and everything considered, we congratulate the sporting spirit of the Old Drury Players.

LOUISE HARBOURNE.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE WESTMINSTER DRAMATIC SOCIETY

"Aren't we all?" is, with the possible exception of "On Approval" the best, and certainly the most significant of Mr. Lonsdale's plays: for that reason we were grateful to the Westminster Dramatic Society for a chance of renewing our acquaintance with it. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Lonsdale's plays are among the most difficult that an amateur society can undertake, because their artificiality and subtle polish require slickness and technical knowledge that is only the result of much experience: without clear-cut and definite acting, Lonsdale is robbed of a brilliance that is essentially his.

The main fault of the Westminster Dramatic Society's production was that everyone was playing in a different key: some overacting to a point of gross caricature, others underacting. Finally, certain members were so pleased with Mr. Lonsdale's 'bon mots' that they over-emphasised them to such an extent that all the wit was drained from them: nothing annoys an audience more than those little knowing glances with which an actor sometimes forestalls a carefully prepared epigram.

The three most pleasing performances came from Miss Joan Masland, Mr. Eric Collis, and Miss Edith Barker: the first two because of their naturalness, and the latter because she came the nearest to understanding the right spirit in which a comedy like this should be played. Incidentally the producer must remember that on a small stage it is very important that the movements should be clean and neat.

ROBERT NEWTON.

THE WELWYN GARDEN CITY THEATRE SOCIETY

The Welwyn Garden City Theatre Society, famous for having won the Lord Howard de Walden Trophy in 1928 and the Belasco Cup in 1927 has, after a period of quiescence and reorganisation, resumed stage work on January 21 by presenting "Foundations," Mr. Cyril Nairne producing. With a play presenting peculiar difficulties, and a caste including some principal players of little experience, Mr. Nairne attained a result commensurate with his reputation and that of the Society.

In "Foundations" Mr. Galsworthy fluctuates (may we say hesitates?) between his characteristic earnestness and a level of comedy that at times approaches the "low," so that an amateur company has the pretty task of avoiding undue heaviness on the one hand and getting a nicely restrained lightness of touch on the other. The theme—class antagonism—is a delicate one, and when Mr. Galsworthy (not ordinarily humorous) sets out to proclaim its post-war survival whilst poking fun at it, he calls for considerable resource on the part of his interpreters. In this instance it was forthcoming—surprisingly, to those unacquainted with Mr. Nairne's extraordinarily patient and thorough

methods. From the quiet and effective opening in the vaulted Park Lane wine-cellars, where the bomb is found, to the amusing *dénouement* in the palatial reception-hall upstairs, the play went with conspicuous ease and smoothness. The action and grouping were particularly well done; and the angry mob and the anti-sweating meeting (both "off") were notable amongst the many examples of very successful attention to detail. To an observer not without experience it was apparent that the production had been handled with a competence that was fully appreciated by the players, who had responded admirably to the calls upon them—an achievement upon which any producer might be congratulated.

T.

THE EDITH CLEMENTS PLAYERS

A most interesting and instructive *matinée* was given on Saturday, November 17, by the pupils of Miss Edith Clements, demonstrating the new methods being taught at the present time of chorus verse speaking, verse drama, jingles and mimes.

The first part of the programme took the form of a lecture demonstration by Miss Clements of the Marjorie Gullan Rhythmic Movements to Spoken Poetry, and as she explained each item a demonstration was performed by children—their ages ranging from 4½ years to 16 years.

The group of her advanced pupils, now established as the Edith Clements Players, were more or less responsible for the rest of the programme, and it would be difficult to find a performance more finished and more instructive than that witnessed by the large and critical audience.

F. BAMFORD.

AUTHORS' FEES FOR AMATEUR PRODUCTIONS.

In accordance with the resolution passed at the Sheffield Conference, the Drama League has approached dramatists with a view to drawing up a list of those who are prepared to grant percentage terms to amateur societies.

The following dramatists are prepared, in certain circumstances, to allow their plays to be performed by amateurs on a percentage basis: Gordon Bottomley, Laurence Binyon, John Brandane, Harley Granville-Barker, Terence Gray, Laurence Housman, Gwen John, Margaret Macnamara, Miles Malleson, Beatrice Mayor, Lennox Robinson, F. Sladen-Smith. Mr. Bernard Shaw regards societies who utilize all profits for the purpose of developing their dramatic work as "professionals" and therefore eligible for professional royalties. Mr. John Galsworthy's usual practice is to maintain the fixed fee basis of payment. Repertory semi-professional societies, if definitely established, and *bona fide* working-class societies are eligible for percentage payment if approved by the Incorporated Society of Authors.

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